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RECENT GIFTS TO THE FONDREN LIBRARY

Sir Harold Caccia, British Ambassador to the United States, was a recent visitor to the Rice Campus. His address to the Rice Associates, to which Dr. Arnold Toynbee supplied a commentary, will be remembered as one of the most distinguished occasions of its kind in the history of the Institute. Sir Harold, who on this and on a previous visit has shown a warm interest in the Fondren Library, has asked that his honorarium be devoted to the purchase of books on the British Commonwealth of Nations. Sir Harold's generous gift will be treated as an endowment, the income from which will be annually used for the purchase of these books. As the first actual endowment which the Library has received, this gift is doubly welcome.

The Library has recently received a most welcome and unexpected gift in the shape of the complete microfilm of all the Sears Roebuck catalogs. Extending to almost a mile of microfilm, the fifty-one reels of the famous Wishing-book trace the history of the American way of living from 1892 to the present.

Through the generosity of the parent company, which is making this handsome gift to selected university and public libraries across the country, and through the good offices of Mr. Stanley W. Shipnes, Houston Manager of Sears, Roebuck and Company, the Fondren Library has received a fascinating social document which would otherwise have been unobtainable.

All readers will have their own memories of the delights of Sears catalogs; the appended description, from a release by the company, gives the Hollywood angle:

> In addition to recording the American merchandising scene over the years, these catalogs represent the work and efforts of

thousands of Americans. Edgar Rice Burroughs, author of the famed "Tarzan" series, was at one time a copywriter for Sears catalogs. Norma Shearer, Jean Arthur, Gloria Swanson, Frederic March, Joan Caulfield, Susan Hayward, Anita Colby and Lauren Bacall all graced the pages of Sears catalogs as models in the years past.

Catalogs of yesteryear not only show that a certain style or item was popular during a certain period, but the amount of popularity each item enjoyed can also be determined by the amount of space devoted to it. Because they accurately reflect the styles and furnishings of bygone years, the old catalogs are frequently used by producers of Broadway shows and Hollywood movies. Walt Disney is the proud owner of the most complete set of old catalogs on the West Coast and consults them frequently for styles and ideas.

Hardin Craig

Another gift of special interest and value is a six-volume reference work entitled Merchant Sail, by William Armstrong Fairburn. The set was published and is distributed by the Fairburn Marine Educational Foundation, Inc. (William A. Fairburn, Jr., President) of Center Lovell, Maine, and is not for sale. This work was edited by Ethel M. Ritchie, Vice-President

and Assistant Treasurer of the Foundation. Included is an account of the author's experience as apprentice draftsman, naval architect and marine engineer, and as a superintendent engineer from 1890 to 1908. The six volumes are dedicated "To the student who is seeking, as the author vainly sought in his youth, to learn the truth regarding ships and their relation to the development of the American colonies and the United States."

The 124-page index of vessels--from A. A. Drebert to Zurich--lists over 13,000 names with dates and places of building. The index alone gives an idea of the immensity of some research problems when definite facts are not given. There are listed 55 vessels with the name Sally, and there are 18 Venuses, 27 Neptunes, and 240 with the name Mary or combinations of that name.

The work began, not as a book intended to be published, but as a series of informal jottings of a man engaged for years in shipbuilding and operation.

In arranging these records, a few volumes of drawings, photographs, documents, and descriptive matter were prepared for family use. It was in this preparation that the value of turning a hobby into a serious work for historians became obvious and resulted in the present volumes.

Merchant Sail, in six volumes, 4,179 pages, will take an important place on the shelves of any reference library, where it may be used by both marine architect and historian.

W. S. D.

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At the fall meeting of the Friends of the Fondren Library on December 6, 1957, Mr. B. E. Brewer gave a talk on the architectural plan of The Rice Institute, supplementing his address with photographs and drawings. Friends who attended this meeting exhibited so much interest in the subject that we are including in this issue of the FLYLEAF a synopsis of his address.

THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS AND ARCHITECTURAL CONTINUITY*

by

B. E. Brewer

The addition of new buildings to an existing architectural composition provokes a study of architectural continuity, or that quality which produces a unity in time and space among elements of an historically developing composition. The role of the architect must include "an awareness," to quote T. S. Eliot, "not only of the pastness of the past but its presence." I have chosen The Rice Institute campus in Houston, Texas, an an actual site to explore this problem, with a desire that the whole campus be articulated by the inclusion of a new part.

In 1909 Ralph Adams Cram developed a master plan and was the architect for the first seven buildings on the campus. William Ward Watkin, the chairman of the department of architecture at the recently founded Institute, instructed Mr. Cram

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*This was the subject of a thesis submitted by Mr. Brewer to the faculty of Princeton University.

that "the trustees of the Rice Institute have wholly avowed a belief in the potency of a noble and impressive architecture in inspiring and ennobling the youth who study and live within its shadows." Mr. Cram created a "new style" that, while built on a classic basis, "should have the romanticism, pictorial quality, and structural integrity of Gothic architecture." Mr. Cram derived his architectural forms from a supposition of what would have developed if the religious force initiated by Saint Benedict and precipitated by all the consequent religious orders from the Cistercians to the Franciscans had become operative on the Mediterranean races. An architecture similar to that which can be seen today in the historic buildings of Pisa, Lucca, Como, and Venice.

Since that time numerous facilities have been added to house an expanding educational curriculum for fifteen hundred students, and today the institute is in the midst of a long overdue multi-million dollar building program to include student

center, chapel, dormitories, science buildings, and lecture rooms.

My thesis is that the development of the master plan should be continued and that two specific buildings should be added: a student center and a meditation chapel. An architectural composition consists of two parts, the context (the buildings) and the content (the meaning): and, therefore, I propose that the design problems are not to be a superficial adaptation of an architectural style, but must provide the architecture of The Rice Institute with a "meaning," and, therefore, must provide a visual expression of the educational philosophy of The Rice Institute.

"True modern architecture," says Frank Lloyd Wright, "like classical architecture, has no age. It is a continuation of all the architecture that has gone before, not a break with it. A modernist does not destroy that culture that has been, nor set up a road block for the future. He belongs to the past, to the present, and offers a prophesy to the future."

AN INTERESTING EXHIBIT IN THE FONDREN LIBRARY

A showing of interest, sponsored by the English-Speaking Union, Houston Branch, was on display in January at the Fondren. On loan from the Books Across the Sea Library in New York was a collection of about twenty illustrated volumes on England, Wales, and the University towns. Handsome travel posters were also on display. Several of the more notable books pictured in color the Welsh countryside; many others were also in color. Some black and white photographs of Oxford and its colleges were particularly good. This small exhibit is one of five which are being shown in the Houston area by the Books Across the Sea Library, one of the continuing programs of the English-Speaking Union. This Library has branches in London and New York, and both operate to acquaint readers with American and British ways of life. The children's library collection is especially popular. All books in this Library are available for lending or display by qualified libraries.

Louise Camden

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